

New Projects after the MPR

With the Meher Pilgrim Retreat—the major new pilgrim accommodation facility to the west of the Samadhi—now constructed and fully operational, the Board is turning its mind to the next major project: the raising of a new Dharamshala, whose site has been designated for the top of the next ridge to the south across the valley from Meherabad Hill.

Envisioned from the time of the first formulation of the Trust's Master Plan in 1998, the Dharamshala will host about 300–400 pilgrims at reasonable rates. Planning for the project is already under way. We hope to begin construction during the 2009–2010 financial year.

Meanwhile, the Trust is moving ahead with other projects: the enlargement of the Meher English School building, the construction of new staff quarters in the vicinity of the MPR, and the laying of a new pipeline that will provide permanent water supply for Meherazad independent of local wells. We hope to complete these projects in the immediate future as the Trust prepares for the major expenses associated with the construction of the Dharamshala two years from now.

The Trust has put into place operating grant agreements that will enable Baba lovers from the United States to make tax deductible donations applicable to Trust operating expenses, specifically for its water facilities, medical programs, and the Meher English School.

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust is supported entirely by love-gifts from Meher Baba's lovers around the world. In truth, it is Baba Himself who gives through your hands, and it is Baba Himself who brings these objects to completion, objects that He Himself laid down in the Trust Deed, when it pleases Him to do so.

For those who have not taken the opportunity to contribute, here is how. In the UK, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Avatar Meher Baba Association c/o of Sue Chapman, 3 Whin Hill, Craster NE663TP, UK tel 01 665 57 69 57, e-mail suchapman@hotmail.com. In the United States, persons who wish to make tax-deductible contributions or wish to name the Trust as a beneficiary in their will, 401K, IRA, or Insurance policy should contact Emory and Susan Ayers, P.O. Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355 (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org); they will send you a list of eight Meher Baba tax-exempt organizations that have a grant in place to support the Trust Development Plan and other relevant information. Baba lovers from other parts of the world should send contributions directly to the AMBPPC Trust, Post Bag No. 31, King's Road, Ahmednagar 414001, Maharashtra State, India. Further information can be found in the Trust's web site at www.ambppct.org.

Kaka Baria

23 February 1891–27 February 1969

Among those men—those jewels among humanity—who lived with Beloved Baba as His mandali over the years, there was none more specifically associated with His ashram at Meherazad than Ardeshir Shapurji Baria, known as Kaka Baria.

Though short and stocky in build, Kaka was indeed a giant in his one-pointed love for Baba, whom he served and obeyed from early in His ministry until the very end. In fact, Kaka first came into contact with Beloved Baba during the phase of the Toka ashram in 1928, having been directed there by Upasni Maharaj; and he came to live with Baba permanently two years later.

During the 1930s, when Baba traveled to the west, He often took Kaka and Chanji with Him, along with various other mandali. Chanji would see to the travel and other external arrangements, while Kaka served as His personal attendant, looking to His personal needs and articles and often keeping night watch.

Kaka became the first of Baba's principal mast hunters, until that role was gradually taken over by his

fellow-disciple and arch-rival, Baidul. Kaka served as Baba's personal attendant during the Great Seclusion in June–July 1949; and in October he was one of the twenty-one who set out with Baba on the New Life. Though physically rugged and altogether fearless in temperament, the rigors of the New Life nonetheless took their toll on Kaka's health. One day while lifting a large vessel of dal up onto a cart, he suffered his first major heart attack. This condition continued to afflict him for the rest of his life.

THE MEHERAZAD YEARS. When Baba returned to Meherazad at the conclusion of the Manonash phase, Kaka was made the manager of the estate. When Baba left for His extended stays in Dehra Dun and Satara between 1953 and 1956, and after that, when Baba passed His summers at Guruprasad in Poona, Kaka remained behind as Baba's Meherazad watchdog, caretaking the property and grounds, and awaiting Baba's return.

During these years—and the 1960s especially—Kaka's heart condition progressively worsened.

He suffered a total of seven major heart attacks and many more minor ones. Dr. Goher, who looked after him, used to say it was medical miracle that Kaka was alive at all. Eventually the progressive heart failure affected his kidneys, and this in turn affected his brain, leaving him unable to talk coherently. He would twist and garble words in exquisitely comic ways. The odd names he gave to things amused Baba greatly, but whenever He asked Kaka, "Who am I?" Kaka would reply "God" or "Allah" or some other divine name. Such was his conviction in the divinity of his Master.



Kaka Baria with Baba during 1958 Sahavas at Upper Meherabad

Knowing of Kaka's speech difficulties, once Mehera suggested to Baba that Kaka be given some meaningful words to practice. So Baba composed a couplet and told Eruch to teach it to Kaka: "Sai Baba, Babajan, Meher Baba che Bhagwan." Kaka made every effort to learn the lines, but when he recited them, the words came out every which way. Frustrated but undaunted, he would compensate by exclaiming and expostulating louder and louder, until eventually the poem dissolved

entirely into shouts of "hoo, hoo, hoo!" Happily, one of these hilarious scenes has been captured on film. In the short video of Mehera's birthday celebration at Meherazad in December 1968, there is a brief sequence that shows Eruch, and Bhau clapping in enthusiastic accompaniment to Kaka's poetic rant, while Baba passes His hand across His face in a near-paroxysm of laughter.

Baba used to say at this time that Kaka was His "toy" who gave Him relief in the midst of His universal suffering. **BABA'S PASSING.** When Baba dropped His body, Kaka simply could not believe it. Once when Bhau was leaving for Meherabad, Kaka ordered him, "Bring Baba back. You bring Baba back here!" And when Bhau returned, Kaka remonstrated, "Why didn't you bring Baba?"

"Kaka, He is already with you," Bhau answered. "When I asked Baba to come back, He said to me, 'Why?' I told him, 'Baba, Kaka wants you.' But Baba told me, 'Tell Kaka, I am with him.'" Kaka poignantly replied, "I just want to embrace Him."

WHAT IS THE AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST?

CREATED IN 1959 under Meher Baba's direction and bearing His signature on its Deed, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust had at its founding two purposes: to provide means of subsistence to certain named disciples of Meher Baba's, and to fulfill certain charitable objects. Today, the first of these functions is discharged under "Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Firstly," and the second under "Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust."

The Trust Deed calls for maintenance of Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb and the creation of pilgrim facilities; for educational, medical, veterinary, and other charitable services; for estate development and procurement of sources of water; for the

promulgation of Avatar Meher Baba's love-message through melas, lectures, publication, and the arts; and for spiritual training. The Trust's current Development Plan focuses on the creation of new facilities for pilgrim accommodation at Meherabad and other goals.

Inquiries and contributions can be sent to: The Chairman, Avatar Meher Baba Trust, King's Road, Post Bag 31, Ahmednagar 414 001, M.S., India. Subscriptions to this newsletter can be sent to that address or to: Avatar Meher Baba Foundation, PO Box 398, Mystic, CT 06355-0398, USA (tel. 860-535-0370, e-mail TrustPlan@ambppct.org). To subscribe to *Tavern Talk* (the Trust's

electronic newsletter), send an e-mail to Listserv@ambppct.org and include in the text of your message the words: "subscribe tavern-talk." Further information about the Trust can be found on its web site at www.ambppct.org and www.avatarmeherbabatrust.org. Subscriptions to *In His Service* or *Tavern Talk* can be submitted through the web site in its "Events and News" section.

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Pilgrimage in an Expanded Meherabad

PILGRIM LIFE AT MEHERABAD underwent a massive transformation during the 2006–07 pilgrim year. For with the 15th June opening of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat off to the west of the Samadhi, and with the hostels in Outer Meherabad to the east continuing to function as before, for the first time overnight pilgrims were dispersed throughout the Meherabad estate across a two-mile diameter.

INCOMING PILGRIM TIDE. At the same time the number of pilgrims, which has crept up steadily over the past decade, took a noticeable leap. In the last few years before its closing in March 2006, the Meher Pilgrim Centre, with its maximum capacity of 56, was almost full much of the time. But in its first season, the Meher Pilgrim Retreat hosted an average of almost 65 a night; and through the three peak months of December-through-February the tallies considerably exceeded that. Since the MPR's capacity is 200, these numbers could be fed and bedded comfortably, without the strain of overcrowding and the inconvenience of frequently having to change rooms as pilgrims often did

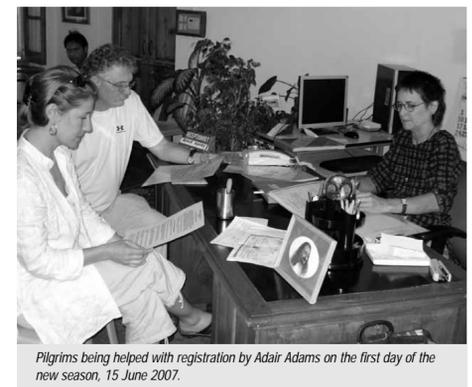
in the past. Indeed, even large parties of up to forty pilgrims could be accommodated in rooms adjacent to each other, while in the past such groups had to be broken up and sent to different facilities.

Meanwhile, Hostel D continued to thrive, averaging about 40 pilgrims nightly. Though we do not have definite figures, the annual total of overnight pilgrims, exclusive of Amartithi, is probably in the neighborhood of 6000. Five-sixths of these are Indians and the remainder from overseas. Most of the pilgrims in Hostel D are Indian, and Indians comprise about half the pilgrim total at the MPR. **INTERNATIONAL PILGRIM MIX.** Another long term trend that became impossible to overlook this year was the increasing number of newcomers from a wider geographical and cultural range. This is certainly true within the Indian Baba family, which is now far more diverse than it used to be. This year, for example, just after Baba's Birthday, Meherabad welcomed pilgrims originating in a Tibetan refugee camp in north India. Yet the

diversification is even more spectacularly evident among the non-Indians. During 2006–07 pilgrims hailed from more than twenty countries—Iran, China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Pakistan, Russia, Israel, Mexico, Argentina, El Salvador, Spain, Italy, Norway, France, Romania, Serbia, England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Germany, Switzerland Australia, the USA. China was represented by a group of eleven, Taiwan by four; twenty-three pilgrims came from Argentina, and at one time, Meherabad boasted almost seventy Iranians! Clearly Baba is doing His own work; the Master Shepherd is gathering His flock from all across the world.

TRANSPORTATION. With Meherabad stretching its geographical envelope, questions of transportation have come into the foreground. As in the past, pilgrims can hire rickshaws. Many prefer to get around Meherabad by walking or riding bicycles. But almost every day, and often twice daily, a bus carries passengers from the MPR to Lower Meherabad and back again. With Bhau giving talks at the old Pilgrim Centre every Monday and Friday and the theater sponsoring programs of music, drama, dance, and film several times a week, Lower Meherabad continues to be a magnet and vital center of pilgrim life.

And the Second Season at the MPR begins . . .



Pilgrims being helped with registration by Adair Adams on the first day of the new season, 15 June 2007.

End-of-the-Season Celebrations

AMARTITHI. The 38th annual Amartithi commemoration took place this year on a warm Wednesday under sunny skies. As in the past, Meherabad was transformed over the three-day period of the gathering into a small city, with pandals springing up at various locations around the Trust estate, and thousands of pilgrims streaming up and down the Hill. As always,

the climax arrived at noon on 31st January, when the massive crowd assembled under the Amartithi pandal observed silence for fifteen minutes, in remembrance of that moment in 1969 when the Avatar of the age dropped His body. Over the four decades since the first of these commemorations in 1970, Amartithi has grown from a small, homespun, family affair to a large public event. Though the size of the gathering has remained fairly constant for the last eight or nine years, the 2007 Amartithi seems to have been the largest so far. About 11,800 registered pilgrims availed themselves of Trust overnight accommodations, a number exceeding that of all previous years.

The event was managed largely by a corps of 820 volunteers who came to Meherabad from all over India and elsewhere for a five-day stint, dedicating the greater part of their time to the innumerable small tasks which a gathering of this size and complexity entails.

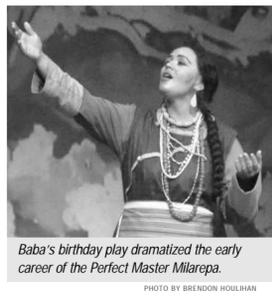
BABA'S BIRTHDAY. The pilgrim season concludes each year with the birthday festivities. Since Baba indicated that His Birthday was best celebrated at one's own home center, the celebration at Meherabad is a mid-sized affair with several hundred pilgrims and resident locals participating in a lively schedule of

events that begins in the early morning and runs past sundown.

The main event is the early-morning gathering at the Samadhi. By 4:30 a.m. pilgrims had already lined up

in a queue that wound back and forth in the space between Baba's Samadhi and the Sabha Mandap on Meherabad Hill. The Tomb itself was decked out gloriously, with garlands and streamers and colored ornaments. After the Meher Dhoon (a singing of Meher Baba's name), at five exactly the crowd all shouted "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" The prayers followed, and then three hours of singing, as His lovers individually offered their praise in commemoration of the Avatar's birth.

Every year the Meherabad pilgrims and resident community join together to stage an original drama, usually written in December and January and rehearsed during the three weeks after the Amartithi cleanup. This year its subject was the life of Milarepa, an illustrious Perfect Master and one of the most famous personalities in the history of Tibet.



Baba's birthday play dramatized the early career of the Perfect Master Milarepa.

PHOTO BY BRENDON HOULIHAN



Over 11,800 registered pilgrims gathered on Meherabad Hill to celebrate Amartithi.

PHOTOS BY WILLENE JOHNSON

PHOTO BY FRANK BLONDE

Amartithi on the Internet

WEBSITE COVERAGE. The first Amartithi webcast was conceived in 1998 when a young man from Hyderabad was not able to attend the 29th Amartithi and realizing that there must be many people around the world like him, envisioned broadcasting Amartithi online for those who could not attend in person. The following year he and another energetic young man from Hyderabad brought their desktop computer and monitor, from Hyderabad to Meherabad Hill. At that time the crowning achievement consisted in several fifteen-second video clips taken from the threshold of the Samadhi, which had to be rushed to Pune for uploading through a cyber cafe there.

Each year since then, the internet coverage has steadily

the gathering on 1st February with the prayers in many languages, the webcast programming provided 25 hours of live audio-visual coverage, available through the Trust web site at www.ambppct.org.

The Amartithi webcast also included an hour's worth of downloadable clips, each of them five to ten minutes of edited material with voice-overs, that surveyed aspects of the Amartithi experience that the live coverage could not reach. (The live broadcasting, of course, was confined geographically to the vicinity of the sound booth in the main Amartithi pandal.) The web site also featured many photos of the event, taken all over the Trust estate.

HIGHLIGHTS. Some of the highlights of the coverage included Bhaui's talk on 31st January, the "Meher Dhoon" (singing of Baba's name) that followed it, and the fifteen minutes of silence from 12 noon until 12:15. Another powerful segment was a video clip interview in which Meherwan Jessawala narrated his and his family's experience of the original Amartithi in 1969. The live coverage captured many moving performances in various genres—bhajan and song, dance, film and

even magic—in which Baba's lovers poured out their love for their Beloved, the Avatar of the age.

FUTURE PROSPECTS. All of this webcasting is being accomplished with extremely limited equipment and resources, and such expertise as the Trust's internet team has been able to cultivate over the last few years. Nonetheless, the Trust hopes to expand and improve its webcasting, not only for Amartithi but other events during the pilgrim season.

Images of Amartithi shown online



Kusum Mohkam Singh performs brilliantly



Rustom and Sorab at their finest singing at Amartithi



Sugar cane juice preparation at Meherabad



Train dropping off pilgrims

Online Library

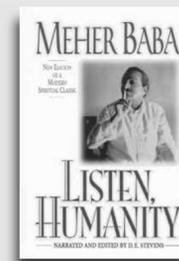
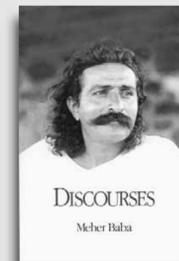
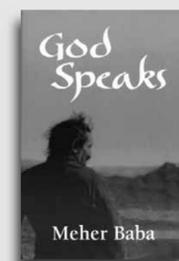
IN MID JANUARY, culminating an effort that began almost ten years ago, the Trust launched its Online Library. Hosted on the Avatar Meher Baba Trust web site, the Online Library in its first incarnation offered a menu of twelve books in the form of pdf files. Eight of these are works of Meher Baba's own authorship: *God Speaks*; *Discourses* (seventh edition); *Listen, Humanity*; *The Everything and The Nothing*; *Beams from the Spiritual Panorama*; *Life at its Best*; *The Path of Love*; and *Sparks from Meher Baba*. Works by other authors include *Sparks of the Truth*, a version prepared by C. D. Deshmukh; *The Wayfarers*, by William Donkin; *The God-Man*, by Charles Purdom; and *Meher Baba, the Awakener*, by Charles Haynes. (The Intelligence Notebooks, originally released through the Online Library, have subsequently been moved to the Archives section.)

COOPERATION AND GENEROSITY OF BABA'S WORLDWIDE FAMILY. Though the Trust web site is serving as the venue, much of the crucial work in the preparation of these digital texts was carried out by members of the Avatar Meher Baba Listserv, "Baba-Talk." The project got off the ground in February 1997, when a group of listserv members undertook the enormous labor of "digitizing" a representative selection of the Meher Baba literature. Some of this work now appears in the Online Library, and more will be released there when its preparation is complete.

Extraordinary generosity has also been shown by the various copyright holders who graciously gave their permission for the online-publication of this material, and by the various publishers who helped and supported the project in many ways. Indeed, the very existence of this Online Library is itself a tribute to the loving cooperation of Meher Baba's lovers and various groups and organizations all around the world, brought together in their common dedication to Beloved Baba.

At present, the Online Library is still in its infancy. In the coming months and years, the Trust hopes both to enlarge the selection of online literature and improve its presentation. In time, we hope that the Online Library will develop and mature into a multi-dimensional resource facilitating online research by Baba lovers and other people from around the globe.

It can be visited at: <http://www.ambppct.org/meherbaba/online.php>.



In a video interview broadcast online, Meherwan Jessawala narrated his and his family's experience of the original Amartithi in 1969.

increased in scope and quality. But 2007 witnessed a quantum leap, due to the new availability of a DSL (broadband) connection on Meherabad Hill.

In the last days before the gathering, a quickly improvised telephone line was run half a kilometer to the sound booth in front of the Amartithi stage, where the live video could stream together with the audio feed from the mixer. Between 3 pm on 30th January, when the program began with a musical rendering of the Parvardigar prayer in Hindi, and the closing of

Archives Online: Global Access to Manuscripts, Diaries and Letters

IN LATE MARCH, the Trust's Archives team inaugurated a major new section of the Trust website. This online resource center provides internet access to some of the first fruits of the Trust archiving effort of the last fifteen years.

As readers of this newsletter will know, for almost a decade the Trust archive's team has been busy establishing facilities for the preservation of precious materials connected with this Avataric advent. Manzil-e-Meher, the archives building at Meherabad, and a similar facility at Meherazad, have been the main focal points for this endeavor.

Concurrent with this meticulous preservation work, which necessarily moves slowly, the archive's team has been digitising some of the prizes from among the documentary collection and preparing them for online publication. As Meheru put it, "Our intention is to begin electronically opening up each cupboard and trunk and invite you to have a look online!" Some of

these facsimiles have already been published over the last several years through Tavern Talk (the Trust listserv). But with the online Archives, the public can now enjoy this collection in a far more convenient and aesthetically pleasing form, which initially consists of facsimile files which can be opened or downloaded in the standard pdf format. This initial launch will then be followed, as technical and time constraints permit, by a more interactive version of the site which will also allow users with slower internet connections easier access to specific items.

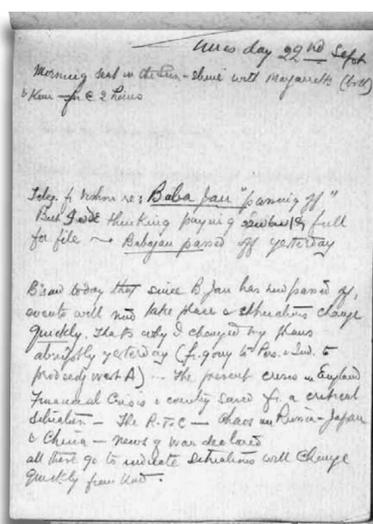
THE ONLINE COLLECTION. Actually, the online Archives will consist of far more than just documents. As currently conceived, the collection will feature, as additional categories, "still images" (photographs), "moving images," "audio recordings," and presentations of "Baba's belongings." All these sections are still under development.

But the first section of the online Archives,

"written materials," already presents in facsimile several extraordinary manuscripts that will certainly attract the close scrutiny of general readers and scholars for centuries to come. Some of the chief treasures of the current online collection are these.

CHANJI'S DIARIES. Between the mid-1920s and his death in 1944, Framroze Dadachanji, Baba's secretary, kept detailed diaries chronicling Baba's activities. While the total compilation of his diaries is enormous, so far ten volumes have been put online. The period of coverage runs (with some gaps) between November 1927 and January 1935.

INTELLIGENCE NOTEBOOKS. In 2005 Sheriar Foundation published



Page from Chanji's diary, 22nd Sept 1931, about Babajan's death ("passing off") and how changes in world events were anticipated

Infinite Intelligence, an important exposition on metaphysics, probably dictated by Meher Baba in 1926, that was edited by the Trust under the supervision of Bhaui Kalchuri. The two volumes of the "Intelligence Notebooks" are the original manuscript on which this book is based. In publishing this manuscript through the internet, the Trust fulfills a promise it made in this newsletter a year ago.

COMBINED DIARY. This title is inscribed at the head of a 750-page, two-volume set of notebooks containing the reminiscences of five of Baba's disciples—Padri, Pawar, Pandoba, Nadirshaw, and Chanji—over a period running from July 1924 through the end

of August, 1927. Since late 2003 the Trust Archives has been publishing the "Diary" serially, both in facsimile and with prose synopsis, through Tavern Talk. The materials released to date have been collected here.

HEART TALK LETTERS. Over the past four years the Archives has been publishing through the Trust listserv, both in facsimile and in transcript, a range of correspondence between Beloved Baba and some of His close ones. Correspondents include his mother, Shireen; His siblings Mani, Beheram, and Adi; Adi K. Irani; Dr. Ghani and Ramjoo; Rano and Nonny Gayley; William Donkin; Will and Mary Backett.

OTHER FEATURES. In addition to the actual collection, the online Archives provides a history of the Trust's archival project, a survey of its facilities and activities, some of its foundational documents, and important information on copyright. The Archives can be found at <http://www.ambppct.org/archives/index.html>.

Young Adults Sahavas

Young Baba lovers between the ages of 19 and 35 are invited to attend and participate in the 2007 Young Adults Sahavas, which will be held at Meherabad from Sunday through Friday, 22nd through 27th July.

As in the past, Sahavas participants will be accommodated in Hostel C. Other family members or friends must make separate arrangements to stay at Hostel D or the Meher Pilgrim Retreat.

You can find information and a Sahavas registration form on the Trust web site at <http://ambppct.org/events/sahavas.php>. To register at Hostel D, send your e-mails to jaibaba@ambppct.org. Inquiries relating to the Sahavas program and event should be sent to mbyas@ambppct.org.

1958 Sahavas Commemoration

In February 2008, the Trust will be hosting a program commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1958 Sahavas which Beloved Baba gave to His lovers at Meherabad between 15th and 26th February 1958.

Scheduled for Meherabad from 15th to 17th February next year, the anniversary program will include short speeches by 1958 Sahavas participants, bhajans that were sung during 1958 Sahavas, a short skit and play based on the deliberations of that sahavas, and a film documentary about the original sahavas.

Those who wish to attend should reserve their lodging at Meherabad well before 31st January 2008. Further information about the event will be published through fliers, on Tavern Talk, and on the Trust web site.

Afforestation of Meherabad Hill

Over the last few decades an enormous transformation in the landscape of Meherabad has been wrought by programs of afforestation. Early photographs of Meherabad in the 1920s show a barren scenery with hardly a tree in sight. Today, the greater part of the Meherabad estate is green, and new saplings are under cultivation in plots that have until now been empty fields.

Seven or eight years ago several thousand new trees were planted around the base of Meherabad Hill to the east and south. Over the last three years the focus has shifted to the Hill's crown and the ridge in back.

If you walk north from the Samadhi (away from Lower Meherabad), immediately you will enter into an orchard of tamarinds, awlas, and sita-phals, planted by Dadi Kerawalla (under Padri's supervision) in the 1970s. The far end of the orchard is delineated by a cactus hedge.

Beyond this extends a twelve-acre plot that the Trust has designated as the future Amartithi gathering site. In this field about 1000 new trees have been planted—arjun, bodhi, many species of cassia, banyan, and other flowering trees that will give Amartithi pilgrims shade and shelter during the sunny January days. All these trees are being watered through drip irrigation, and they are growing well. Within ten years or so, they should start to develop a leafy canopy.

Nearby, Meherabad has established a tree nursery, where Trust workers are growing (from seed) trees that can't be bought locally. Some of the seeds have been culled from old, historic trees connected with Baba and the early life of Meherabad.

As a part of long term planning, afforestation is moving ahead in a variety of other parts of Meherabad as well.